Hamilton Field, Group Headquarters
(Facility No. 500)
Southwest of Escolta Avenue at 4th Street
Novato
Marin County
California

HABS No. CA-2398-N

HABS
CAL
21-NOVA,
1N-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

HABS
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21- NOVA,
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HAMILTON FIELD
Group Headquarters
(Facility No. 500)

HABS No. CA-2398-N

Location: Hamilton Army Air Field
Novato, Marin County, California
Group Headquarters
Facility No. 500 (southwest of Escolta Avenue at 4th Street)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980)
Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 1980)
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;
C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

Present Owner: General Services Administration, Washington, D. C.

Present Occupant: GSA

Present Use: Limited civilian use (offices)

Statement of Significance:

The base headquarters is the architectural focal point of the base as well as the administrative center. Located in the hub of the main base configuration of buildings, its elegant Spanish Eclectic architecture and formal landscaping were an impressive sight upon entering the base proper. This building is an example of the application of an important architectural trend (Spanish Colonial Revival) adapted to reflect California's Mission heritage in a departure from traditional military architecture.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report HABS No. CA-2398-F for a condensed general Statement of Significance.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: The contract for the headquarters building was ewarded on December 5, 1933, and the building was completed on November 16, 1934 (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).

2. Architect: Hamilton Field was designed under the guidance of Captain Howard B. Nurse, Construction Quartermaster. He was assisted by a corps of civilians headed by H. P. Spencer, Chief Architect, and F. W. Salfinger, Chief Engineer. Captain F. C. Petes and Lieutenant J. H. Veal of the Quartermaster's Corps were detailed to Marin County by the War Department to assist Nurse (*Novato Advance* May 28, 1932). Landscaping efforts were directed by C. C. Stevens, a local landscape engineer, using plantings chosen by Nurse and donated by Marin County citizens.

3. Original Owner: Hamilton Field is on land originally owned by private individuals and companies. In 1930, the California Packing Company sold 630 acres of land to Marin County to use to entice the Army to build on the site. An additional 161 acres were purchased from Dr. T. Peter and Julia Bodkin. These parcels were combined with other County-owned land, and in 1932 Marin County sold a 927-acre percel of land to the Department of the Army for $1.00 for use by the Army Air Corps as an air field. In 1947 Hamilton Air Field was transferred to the newly-formed U. S. Air Force and renamed Hamilton Air Force Base. In 1974 the U. S. Congress declared the installation excess to military needs and closed the base (Maniery et al. 1993). The property was transferred to the General Services Administration in 1974 and is currently being sold as excess property.

4. Builder, Contractor, Supplier: The contract to build the headquarters building was awarded to Meyers Construction Company of San Francisco for a bid of $83,100.00. Total cost of the building was $82,292.51 (Hamilton Facility Cards 1957-1971). The Public Works Administration funded $80,000.00 of this total cost (U. S. Army Corps of Engineers 1939).

5. Original Plans and Construction: Original plans for administrative and industrial buildings were drawn on linen with black ink by Nurse's corps of architects. The originals appear to have been destroyed, but copies of some of these plans (elevations, electrical, plumbing) are filed at the National Archives, Pacific Division, San Bruno, CA. and the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato. Facility cards for these buildings, including an original photograph taken at completion of construction, and floor plans are on file at the Novato History Museum, Hamilton Room, Novato, California.

6. Alterations/Additions: Modifications to the building have been minor and related primarily to basic upkeep. Original linoleum floors were replaced with eight-inch asphalt tiles and some temporary partitions reconfigured space in the basement. Some of the original fixtures have been replaced with fluorescent lights.

B. Historical Context:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) and Section B of report HABS No. CA-2398-F. From its completion in 1934 the Headquarters building served as the administrative hub of Hamilton Field.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Approximately 135 buildings on base were constructed during initial buildup at Hamilton. Designed and built under the direction of Captain Howard B. Nurse, an engineer with the Office of the Quartermaster General in Washington, D.C., these buildings are the most architecturally detailed on base, reflecting the personal inspiration and care of Nurse. Nurse was assisted in his endeavors by a group of local civilian architects and engineers led by H. P. Spencer, Chief Architect, and F. W. Salfinger, Chief Engineer (Spencer 1935).

In a departure from traditional base architecture, Nurse and his staff designed the buildings in a Spanish Eclectic style, popular in America between 1915 and 1940. Churrigueresque elements, as seen on the ornate facades, were used in some of the more important buildings: group headquarters, non-commissioned officers' (NCO) barracks, the base theater, and the base hospital. Some architectural elements reflect the military function of the base, including the use of the eagle and shield on the NCO barracks, the group headquarters building, and the fireplaces at the officers' club; the caduceus in the brackets supporting the hospital portico; and the Army five-pointed star on the hangars and other buildings.

The primary method of construction for the administrative and industrial buildings was reinforced concrete covered with stucco exteriors and Mission tile roofs. Foundations of all buildings were constructed of reinforced concrete, in consideration of the seismic activity in the region.

2. Condition of fabric: The headquarters building is in good condition. It is still in use and minimally maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The group headquarters building was constructed in a "T" plan, with a two-story rectilinear central mass and projecting one-story wings on the front facade. The building measures 131 feet by 32 feet in the two-story central portion and the one-story wings measure 32 x 72 foot. From the air it has the shape of an airplane.

2. Foundation: The foundation is constructed of precast concrete piles and reinforced concrete with a 12-inch concrete floor poured on top of a six-inch crushed rock or gravel fill.

3. Walls: The exterior walls consist of poured-in-place concrete brush coated with cementitious stucco rendered with a smooth face. They are 12 inches thick. Exterior detailing on the wings consists of a band course of decorative tilework extending the length of the covered arcade beneath the windows. A Spanish Churrigueresque facade surrounds the central entry and second floor balcony and is the focal point of the front elevation. It contains ornate pilasters, finials, scrollwork, and emblematic motifs, all in terra cotta. There is a pendentive bracket cornice band immediately beneath the front gable roof, with a circular vent containing a cast stone six-pointed star in its central peak. Windows have projecting cast concrete sills.

4. Structural systems, framing: The building is supported by reinforced concrete columns and a steel girder system with concrete "ribbed" slab flooring spanning between concrete joists. The roof is wooden truss with two-inch by nine-inch rafters that are two feet on center.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The primary entrance is reached by a recessed porch, floored in six-inch-square red quarry tile. A cantilevered balcony with wrought iron grille work railing is located on the second story of the central Churrigueresque facade. Access to the recessed rear entry is provided by a concrete stairway with eight shallow steps and a concrete stoop. The bottom stair is flanked by two short columns with flat-rimmed tops. A metal hand rail divides the stairway in half. The two wings that flank the central mass of the building have loggias with arcaded walkways with five arches supported by square pillars and red cement floors lined off in diamonds. A band course of ornamental polychrome tile is present on the loggia wall.

6. Chimneys: Pipe ventilators protrude from the roofs of the wings, as do capped ventilators. A stucco-clad brick chimney is present in the interior of the two story mass and is attached with a metal cricket.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways/doors: Primary entrance doors are double oak doors with ten lights capped with a fanlight. The entry is recessed in the central front facade and framed by a Churrigueresque surround consisting of two pilasters decorated with acanthus leaves and scrollwork frames. It has a bronze threshold. A pair of multi-light arched metal casement windows provide access to the second story balcony with a wrought iron rail that has a hammered finish, directly above the main entry. The rear entry, which looks down palm-lined 4th Street to the air field, consists of a central recessed glass and panel door topped with a flat cornice supported by bracketed pilasters in cast concrete.

b. Windows/shutters: The original windows in the Headquarters building are multi-light steel industrial casement with six moveable center panels and multi-light transoms. Pairs of multi-light casement windows flank the rear entry, while three identical pairs extend across the second story of the rear facade. Side facade windows have double sets of casement windows with three lights in each. A four-light transom is over the windows. These windows are covered with exterior wrought iron grille protectors. Some of the windows in the front wings have been replaced with modern aluminum frame sash. The steel sash windows are reinforced with 3/4-inch bars around all window and door openings.

8. Roof:

a. Shape/covering: The building has a cross gable roof with front-gable roof on the central mass, flanked by two wings with end-gable roofs. The central portion is gabled and crosses the rear end gable roof. The roof is covered with terra cotta mission tile over roofing felt and has a Mission tile ridge.

b. Cornice/eaves: The central front facade has a decorative arched cornice with a circular vent containing a six-pointed star. The gutter system consists of galvanized tin troughs and metal scuppers with cast iron shoes and cast concrete splash guards.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

a. Basement: The basement is accessed by a stairwell in the central mass and from an exterior staircase at the rear of the building. The front section consists of one large room flanked by smaller rooms. A hallway leading from the stairwell leads to a boiler room and another large room that contained a smaller telephone cable room. The extreme rear of the basement is divided into two moderately-sized rooms. The basement contains a transformer room with an emergency power generator and a boiler room.

b. First Floor: The primary access to the Headquarters Building is through a central entrance and lobby. Two small telephone rooms are recessed in the lobby. The central volume and each wing consist of individual offices; the central offices accessed from a double-loaded corridor and those in the wings by a single corridor. The typical office measures 12 by 12 feet.

c. Second Floor: Offices flank the double-barrelled corridor on the second floor, while a larger room, originally a courtroom, is located on the second story front. The room on the second story rear originally contained the assembly room.

2. Stairways: The building is served by a concrete stairway from the rear of the central lobby to the second story, and another to the basement. Metal edge plates cover the top portion of the risers. The railing is of twisted wrought iron rods topped with an oak handrail.

3. Flooring: Subflooring for the building is six-inch concrete slab. The entrance is floored in 12-inch-square red quarry tile, while the hallways and offices are covered with eight-inch-square marbled beige linoleum tile. Flooring on the second level consists of green and black linoleum tiles. The boiler room floor has an underlayer of water proofing membrane.

4. Wall/ceiling finish: The entrance hall, stairwell, corridors, and offices are painted plaster, primarily white. According to the original plans, the inside face of all exterior walls are furred with two-inch hollow tiles. The lobby has a six-inch tile wainscoting. The ceiling of the lobby has many Spanish Eclectic elements, including unique painted bracketed ceiling beams cast in concrete to resemble rustic Spanish-style *vigas*. The bathroom walls on the first floor are covered in four-inch-square white ceramic tile with black tile trim at top and baseboard; those on the second floor are four-inch-square yellow ceramic tile with black trim. The offices in the wings have modern acoustical tile ceilings and some have composition wooden paneling. Interior walls in the offices consist of a solid wooden panel, a frosted glass panel, and a clear glass panel; much of the glass has now been painted. The basement surfaces are exposed poured-in-place concrete. The assembly room has 16-inch cast concrete ceiling beams and the second floor has a suspended plaster ceiling.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways/doors: The two front wings are accessed from the vestibule by oak glass and panel doors with eight lights above two panels. Two narrow glass and panel doors flank the entryway and provide access to a closet and a telephone booth. A large decorative arch, supported by brackets, provides access from the front vestibule to the rear offices, while narrower archways lead to the front wings. Doorways in the front wings are oak glass and panel, while those in the rear wing

consist of a large glass pane above a single panel; moveable glass transoms are located over each doorway.

b. Windows: Interior windows provide light to the offices from the central hallways. Each office facade consists of a central glass and panel door with moveable transom, flanked by large frosted glass panels beneath clear glass panes. Glass panes in some of the offices have been painted.

6. Decorative features/trim: Decorative trim in the vestibule consists of the cast-concrete painted *vigas* on the ceiling, and decorative archways supported by brackets which lead from the vestibule to the wings. No other decorative trim was noted. Concrete 16-inch ceiling beams provide relief in hallways and some rooms.

7. Hardware: The door hardware consists of a standard circular knob and lock set with half mortise door hinge. The main entry has an etched bronze thumb latch handle.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: A boiler room in the basement contained a gas-fired boiler that provided steam to a natural draft system. Gas steam radiators made by American Radiator Company provided heat to every room. A sump pump was located in the floor of the boiler room and was protected by an iron grate. It is in a two-foot square and four-foot deep pit.

b. Ventilation: Ventilation for the building is through Mission tile roof louvers in the gable ends. The basement transformer room has a 12-inch-square grille vent and the roof has 6-inch circular metal vents.

c. Lighting: The original lighting in the vestibule consists of two "Monterey Style" fixtures of twisted wrought iron and eight candle-style lights. Original fixtures in the hallways and offices consisted of "schoolhouse" lights with a canopy and chain and a large milk glass shade. They are extant in the lower floor hallway and in some offices. Those in the offices have been replaced with modern suspended, industrial type, open end fluorescent fixtures. The light outside the front door is a cast aluminum ornamental pendant lantern. Porcelain pull chain lights are in the restrooms.

d. Plumbing: Original latrine fixtures are present on both floors of the building. The latrines on the first floor has its original "Standard" sink, flush-valve "Standard" toilet, and lighting fixture. A small bath, in the north wing has an original sink and flush-valve "Standard" toilet. There are two latrines on the second floor, one with a "Eljer" flush-valve urinal, two flush-valve toilets, and an

original metal partition. The second bath contained only a cast iron mop sink; the toilets had been removed. Original ceramic drinking fountains are located in both the first and second floor hallways.

e. Miscellaneous: A dumbwaiter, measuring two feet square, connects the basement and the first floor.

9. Original Furnishings: No original furnishings were noted.

D. Site:

1. General site orientation: The primary facade of Building 500 faces southwest. It is located in the original Spanish Colonial Revival district of Hamilton Army Air Field on a flat site that is surrounded by rolling hills, fitting within a grid system adjacent to the flight field. It is flanked by Buildings 501 and 502, both constructed in 1941 and located within the same semi-circular lawn.

2. Historic landscape design: Captain Nurse's overall plan for base design included thoughtful use of rock walls, terracing, and plantings to create a visual effect that was continued, in a more limited fashion, during World War II. Rock terracing throughout the original base served to simultaneously separate individual residences while visually uniting various sections of the base into an overall city-like plan. They were built as part of the final phase of original post construction in 1935 (Hamilton Official Photographs 1934-1935). Foundation and accent plantings, tree-lined streets, and retention of natural oak groves and rolling hills complement the rock work.

Much of the plantings associated with the headquarters buildings is of the 1930s vintage, although some additions appear to have been added to the original landscaping around World War II. Species observed include *Sandankwa viburnum*, silverberry, butterfly bush, oleander, Oregon grape, juniper, stiff bottlebrush, and golden bamboo. These were used as foundation plantings to soften the transition between the ground and the foundation, and as accent trees. Canary Island date palms, California fan palm, and Mexican fan palm line the way to the headquarters building.

The Group Headquarters Building is accessed via a concrete pathway, with a central flagpole surrounded by four cast concrete benches, set in a semi-circular lawn. Terra cotta urns are bolted to the concrete entry stoop. Threshold conifers flank the front entry and mature plantings of shrubs and pampas grass line the walkway and surround the foundation. The rear entryway is flanked by threshold palm trees.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398). Copies of the original plans for the Headquarters Building are on file at the National Archives, Pacific Division, San Bruno, CA. and the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

B. Historic Maps and Views:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398). Historical photographs of the Headquarters Building are filed at the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

C. Interviews:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

D. Bibliography:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

Sources cited in this individual report are listed below.

Fine, Jesse, and Lenore Remington
1972 *Army Corps of Engineers: Construction in the U.S.* U.S. Army and World War II, Office of Military History.

Hamilton Facility Cards
1933-1971 Maintenance Cards for Base Facilities. On file, Hamilton Army Air Field Installation Office, Novato, and Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

Maniery, Mary L., Leslie R. Fryman, and Fred Hrusa
1993 *National Register of Historic Places Evaluation, Hamilton Army Air Field Historic District, Marin County, California*. Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District.

Thomason and Associates
1993 *Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas*. Cultural Resource Survey, Final Report. Nashville, Tennessee. On file, State Office of Historic Preservation, Austin, Texas.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

F. Supplemental Material:

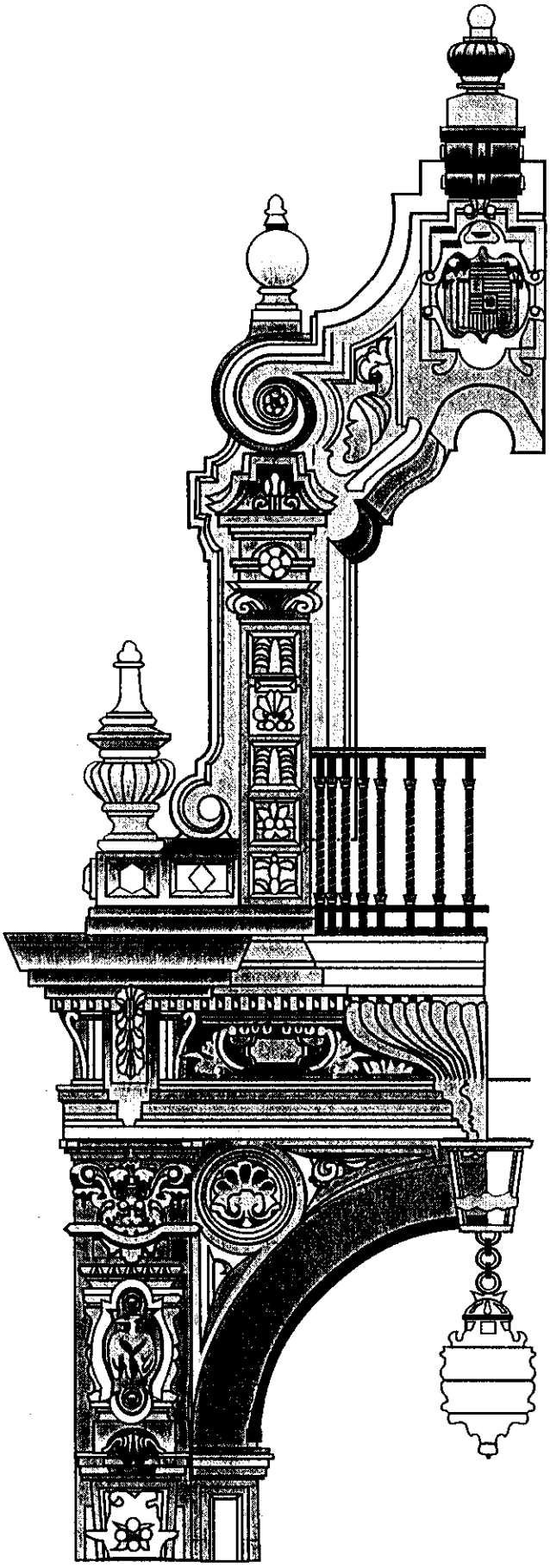
Copies of representative floor plans of Facility No. 500, dated in the 1930s and prepared by the Quartermaster's General Office are attached to this form. A list of equipment placed in the building in the 1930s during its initial construction is also attached to this individual report. Other supplemental material includes a computer rendition of the Headquarter's facade, scanned from original plans. This image was drawn by Christopher MacDonald, PAR Environmental Services, in 1995.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration. The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

The title page, Part I, and Part III were prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian, PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Architectural descriptions in Part II were compiled by Judith Marvin, Historian/Architectural Historian, Foothill Resources, Murphys, California. Descriptions were checked against photographs and plans by Mary L. Maniery and were embellished and corrected, as necessary. Information on historic landscape design was extracted by Mary L. Maniery from a report prepared by Dr. Fred Hrusa, Botanist, PAR Environmental Services. Computer images were drawn by Christopher MacDonald, PAR Environmental Services. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California.



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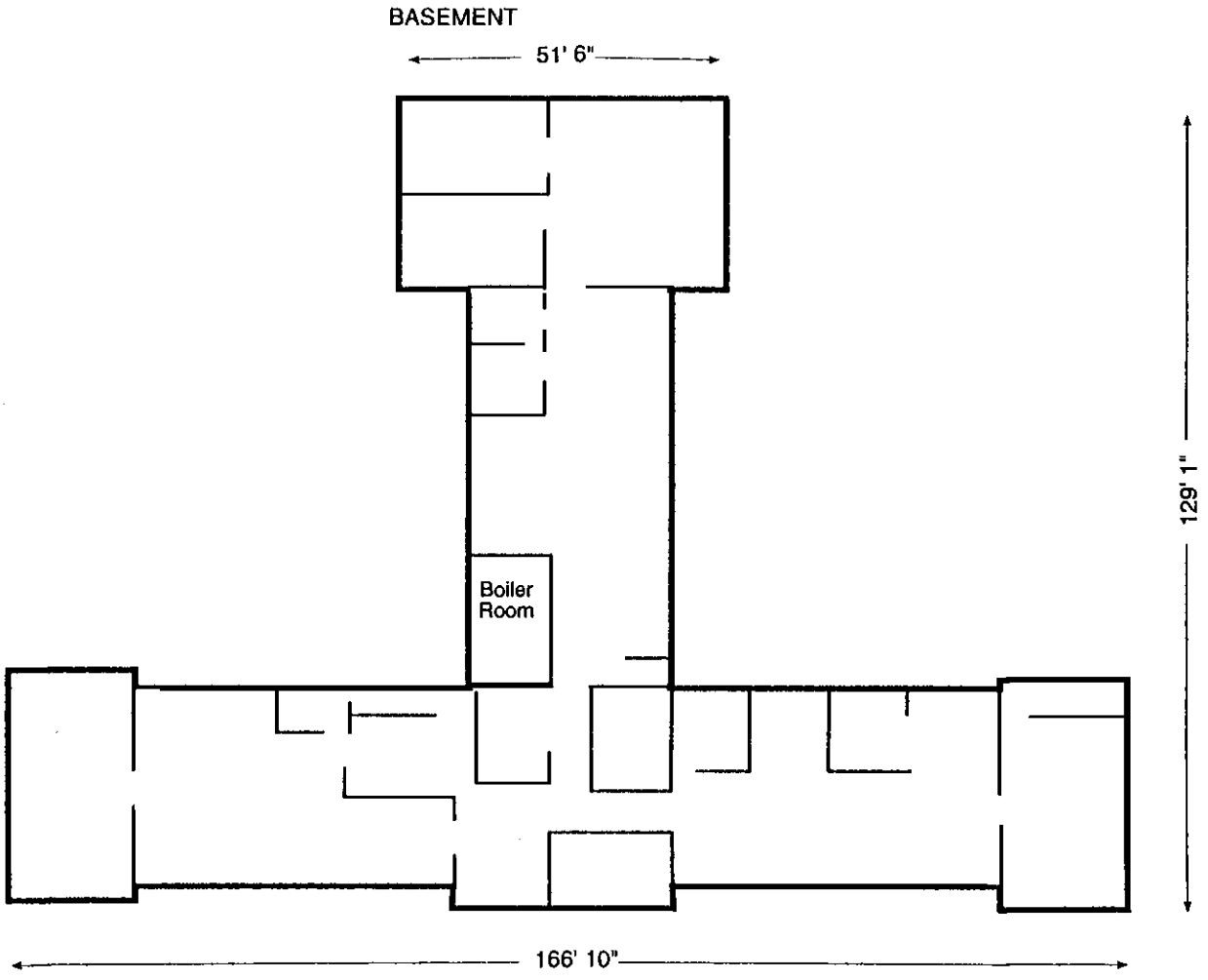
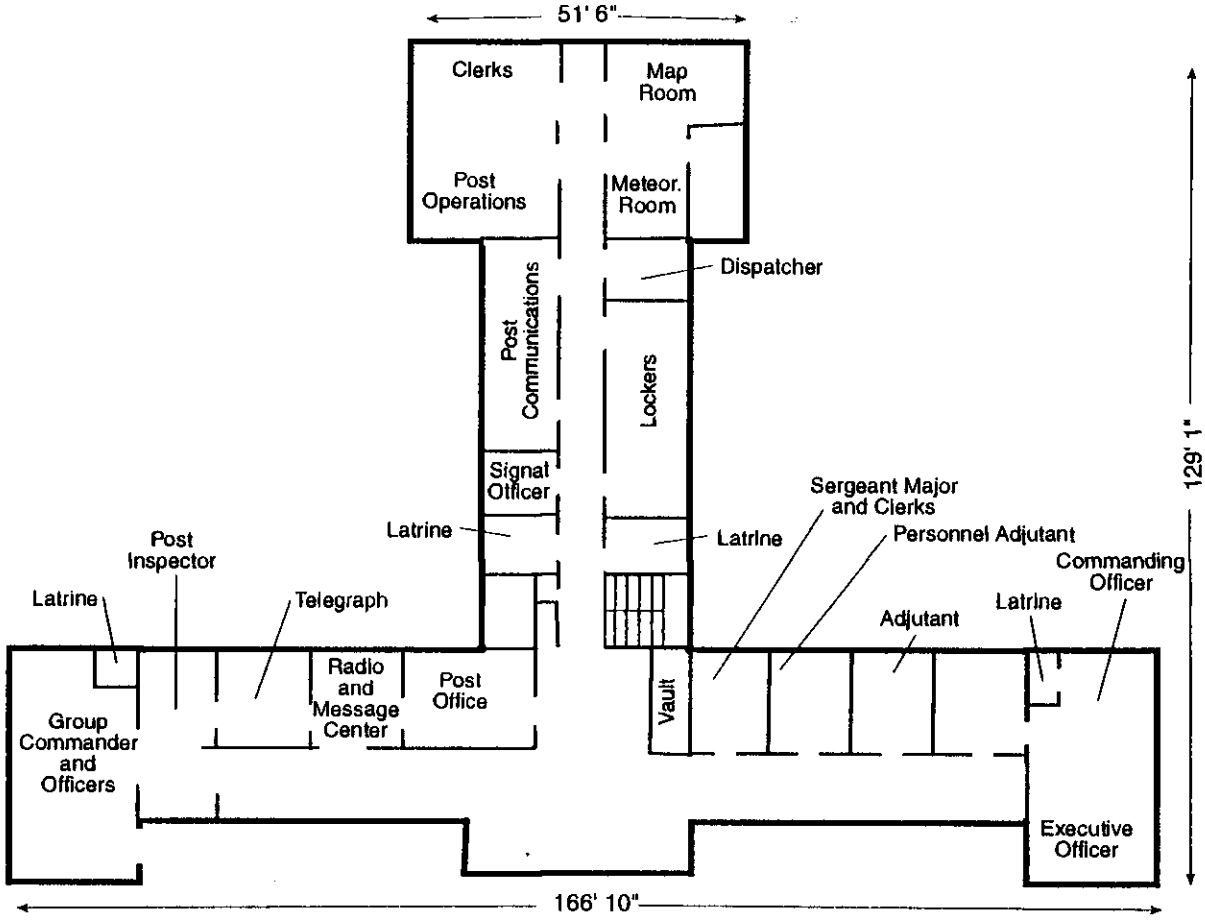
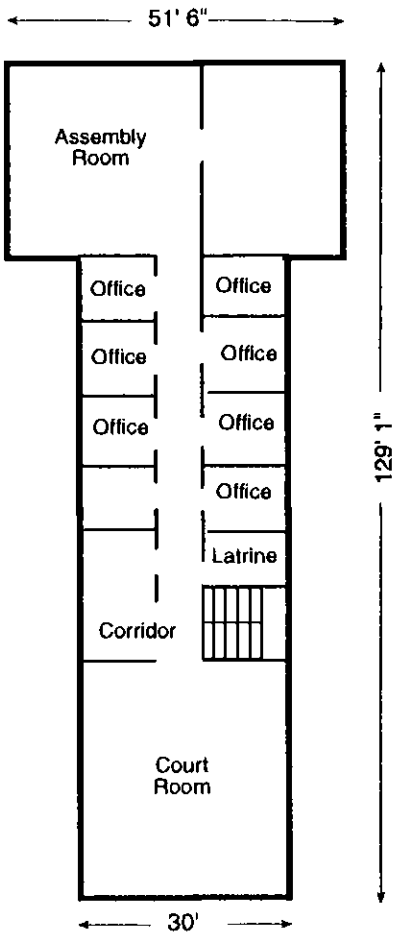
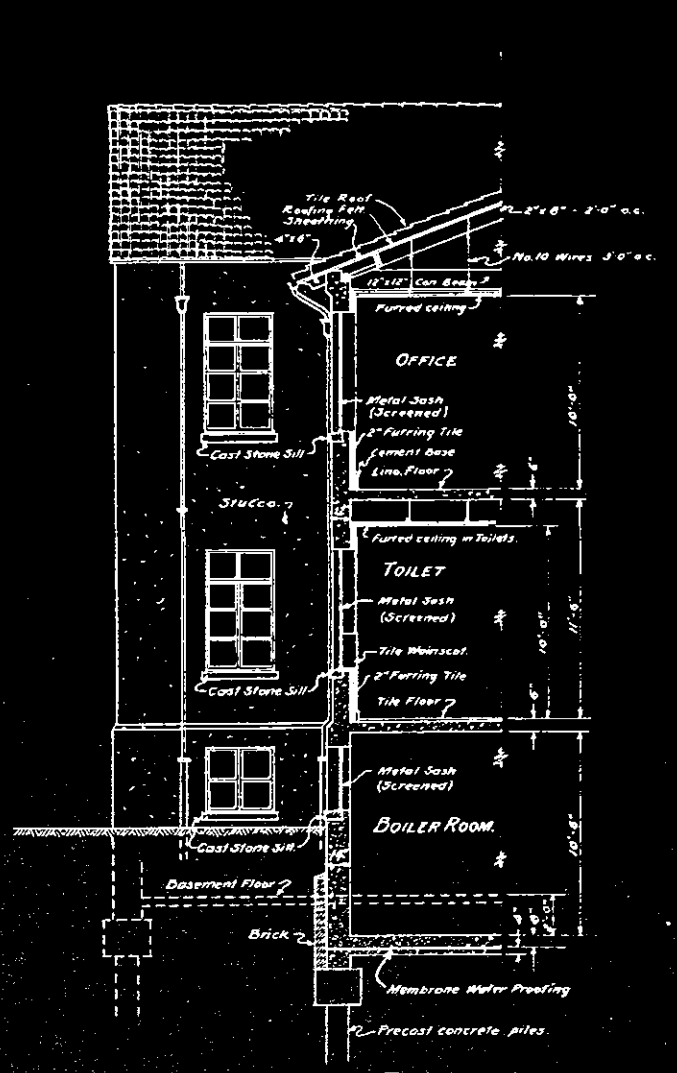

BASEMENT
51' 6"
129' 1"
Boiler Room
166' 10"

FIRST FLOOR

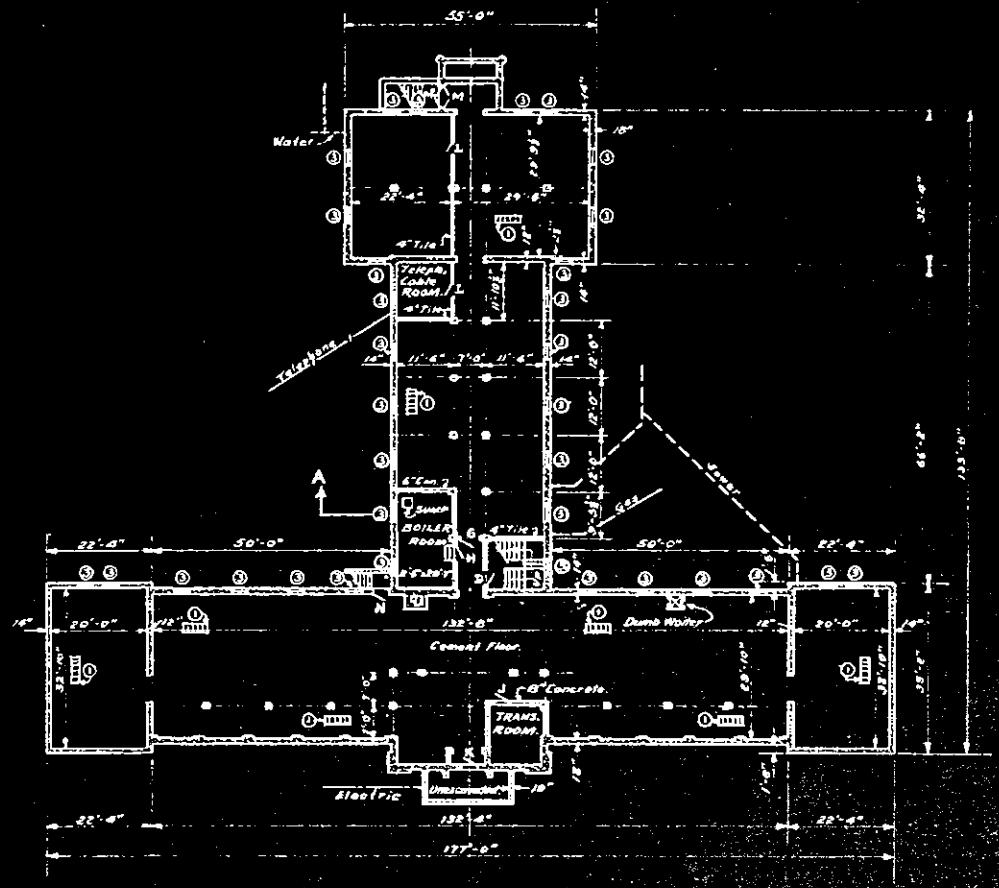

51' 6"
Clerks
Map Room
Post Operations
Meteor. Room
Dispatcher
Post Communications
Lockers
Signal Officer
Latrine
Latrine
Sergeant Major and Clerks
Personnel Adjutant
Commanding Officer
Post Inspector
Latrine
Telegraph
Adjutant
Latrine
Radio and Message Center
Post Office
Vault
Group Commander and Officers
Executive Officer
129' 1"
166' 10"

SECOND FLOOR





WALL SECTION AT A
SCALE $\frac{1}{8}$" = 1'



BASEMENT PLAN
SCALE $\frac{1}{32}$" = 1'

Total C.I.H.W Radio
+40°F. Zone.
C.I. Heating Boiler

RADI A		
MK	SECT'S	T
1	5	7
2	8	3T
3	7	3
4	8	5
5	9	3
6	9	5
7	10	3
8	9	7
9	11	4
10	12	4
11	12	6
12	13	3
13	14	4
14	14	4
15	15	4
16	17	3
17	18	4
18	20	3
19	23	3